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AUTHOR Dharmadasa, Indranie; Dharmadasa, Kiri H.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify preservice teachers' perspectives related to preparedness for multicultural education and to examine the extent to which they differed according to their age and college seniority status. It is important for teachers to have knowledge, skills, and self-awareness in multicultural education. Study participants were 32 perservice teachers, mostly African American, from an early childhood program in a Midwestern university. To gather data on three phases of multicultural education: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" an instrument was developed with items adapted from IMPAC Project (1993). An ANOVA was performed to test the effects of preservice teachers' age and college seniority status on the three phases of multicultural education. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The college seniority status did not record statistically significant differences in the three phases of multicultural education. However, age factor showed a statistically significant difference in the "How much have you developed?" phase. Mean scores for college seniority status showed that graduate students rated highest in the "How much do you know?" and "How much have you developed" phases. The freshmen had the highest mean scores for "How much are you currently able to do?" phase. (Contains 12 references.) (Author/SM)

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Running head: PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives on Multicultural Education

Indranie Dharmadasa and Kiri H. Dharmadasa

Chicago State University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify pre-service teachers' perspectives related to preparedness for multicultural education and to examine to what extent they differed according to their age and college seniority status. To foster intellectual, social, and personal development of all students to their highest potential, it is necessary to minimize the dangers of diversity and pluralism. In this regard, it is important for teachers to have knowledge skills and self-awareness in multicultural education. The participants were 32 pre-service teachers, mostly African American, from an early childhood program in a Mid Western university. To gather data on three phases of multicultural education: "How much do you know? "How much have you developed?" "How much are you currently able to do?" an instrument was developed with items adapted from IMPAC Project (1993). An ANOVA was performed to test the effects of pre-service teachers' age and college seniority status had on the three phases of multicultural education. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The college seniority status did not record statistically significant difference in the three phases of multicultural education. However, age factor showed a statistically significant difference in the "How much have you developed?" phase. Mean scores for college seniority status showed that graduate students rated highest in "How much do you know?" and " How much have you developed phase. The freshmen had the highest mean scores for "How much are you currently able to do?" phase. These findings suggest important implications for teachers and teacher educators.

Early Childhood Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives on Multicultural Education

The present study was undertaken to identify early childhood pre-service teachers' perspectives related to three phases of preparedness for multicultural education: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" and to examine to what extent they differed on age and college seniority status.

Most researchers agree that the major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools, so all students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse society. During the last two decades, there has been considerable progress made in the multicultural education in spite of several widespread myths and misconceptions about it (Banks, 2001). Becoming aware of our own culture facilitates the capacity to explore, understand, appreciate, and assess the many aspects of the culture that make up the social background. Culture is the framework that guides, bounds, and shapes peoples' life practices. Although persons of the same cultural background are prepared to act or think similarly, not all members of the group will behave in exactly the same manner. Because of these variations, an appreciation with respect to both individual and cultural diversity is a crucial aspect of multicultural education (Rodriguez, 1999).

According to Athens (1988), becoming aware of ones own culture facilitates the capacity to explore, understand, appreciate, and assess the many aspects of a culture that make up the social background and increase awareness and insight into ones own learning processes, strengths, weaknesses, successes, failures, biases, values, goals, and emotions. This awareness gives an opportunity to experience our own cultures in relation to the others as they are illuminated through cross-cultural interactions. Further, it helps us understand and confront areas of conflict and tension when we encounter individuals from unfamiliar cultures and learn to become more

comfortable with developing relations with them. The cultural awareness further promotes us to explore and appreciate thought processes that occur across diverse cultures. Also, it may take on different shapes and meanings for different cultural groups and for individual group members when understanding more deeply the cultural values and beliefs of those with whom we come in contact.

Achieving cultural sensitivity requires lowering defenses, taking risks and practicing behaviors that may feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. It requires a flexible mind, an open heart, and a willingness to accept alternative perspectives. It may mean setting aside some cherished beliefs to make room for others whose values are unknown. The rewards, however, are significant: bridging disparate cultures, knowing more about ourselves and becoming more affective interpersonally.

Banks (1988) explains that multicultural education is a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens with feelings of unity and cooperation in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized society. In the last two decades, economic turmoil and unusual levels of immigration have filled the public schools of the United States with a rich rainbow of faces (Campbell, 2000). In most schools and colleges multicultural subject content has found a place in their curricula. More classroom teachers today are studying the concepts of multicultural education than ever before. Demographers predict that by year 2020, minorities will comprise nearly half of the United State's school-age students. Diversity among students can result in many differences, with both beneficial and harmful consequences. For the purpose of fostering the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students to their highest potential, it is necessary to minimize the dangers of diversity and pluralism

(Johnson & Johnson, 2002). New forms of knowledge and new approaches to teaching have emerged in response to changes in the economy, in the society and in schools.

Teachers are the key to educational excellence and equity (Hernandez, 2001). In a pluralistic society, if teachers are ever to fulfill this promise teaching and learning should function within a multicultural framework. In this regard, it demands a high level of teacher preparation for beginning teachers to face the challenges of multiculturalism in future classrooms. Teacher education programs can provide a broad range of theory and practice to prepare them for teaching in diverse classrooms. However, not only that these teachers should be armed with the necessary knowledge and skills in new pedagogies, curricula and strategies, but also, they should have awareness of their own cross-cultural perspectives. Where "early start" and get off on the "right foot" are in high demand for children's later success in life and work (Morrison, 2001), the efforts to prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms should be emphasized. This background has necessitated examining early childhood preservice teachers' perspectives, emphasizing on the three phases: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" in multicultural education.

Method

The sample for this study consisted of 32 pre-service teachers, mostly African American, from an early childhood program in a Mid Western university. An adapted version of "Infusing Multicultural Perspectives Across the Curriculum" (IMPAC) developed by Mount St. Mary's College (1993) which consisted of a total 32 items, was used as the instrument to collect data. The 32 items were categorized into three phases of students' preparedness for multicultural education: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" Each item was ranked on a five- point scale, ranging from "a great

deal" (five) to "nothing at all" (one) to collect pre-service teachers' responses. There were four categories: College seniority status, gender, age and ethnicity included in the instrument to collect demographic data from the participants. As the selected sample did not mainly differ on the basis of gender and ethnicity out of the four categories, only the college seniority status and the age factor were used for analysis of data. The instrument was administered to students enrolled in two early childhood education courses at the beginning of the semester.

Analysis

An ANOVA test was performed to examine the effects, the age and college seniority status had on pre-service teachers' perspectives related to the three phases of students' preparedness for multicultural education. Descriptive statistics also were employed to analyze the data collected. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha coefficient .93 indicates an acceptable reliability measure for the instrument.

Results

The college seniority status did not reveal statistically significant differences in the three phases of students' preparedness for multicultural education: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" However, the age factor showed statistically significant differences (F (3,31)= 3.24, $p < .05$) in the "How much have you developed" phase.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1, reports the mean scores and the standard deviations of overall pre-service teachers' perspectives related to the three phases of multicultural education. Mean scores indicate

starting from the highest to the lowest "How much do you know" 47.12 (SD = 10.26), "How much are your currently able to do" 33.76 (SD = 5.77), and "How much have you developed" 31.24 (SD = 6.81).

Insert Table 2 about here

College seniority status-wise ranks related to the three phases of multicultural education are reported in Table 2. The mean scores for seniority status indicated that graduate students rated the highest the phase "How much do you know?" 49.67 (SD = 9.10) and seniors rated this phase the lowest 39.00 (SD = 9.17). In mean scores for the phase "How much have you developed?" graduate students have rated the highest 33.25 (5.15) while the freshmen rated it the lowest 24.00 (SD = 7.53). For the phase " How much are you currently able to do?" The mean scores showed the highest for freshmen 38.00 (SD = 3.61) and the lowest for seniors 29.67 (SD = 7.77).

Insert Table 3 about here

The age related mean scores in Table 3 showed that the students who are in the age range of 30-40 years rated the highest the phase "How much do you know?" 50.14 (SD = 9.21) and the age range 50 years and above rated it the lowest 42.71 (SD = 19.29). The mean scores for the phase "How much have you developed?" students in the age range of 40-50 years have rated the highest 35.83 (SD = 3.54) and the age range 30-40 years have rated this phase the lowest 25.43 (SD = 6.11). The mean scores for the phase "How much are you currently able to do?" showed

the highest for the category 30-40 year range, indicating a mean of 36.29 (SD = 6.16) and the lowest for the category 50 years and above indicating a mean of 31.67 (SD = 6.43).

Discussion

The present study did not show that pre-service teachers' college seniority status made a significant difference in their perceptions of the three phases of multicultural education: "How much do you know?" "How much have you developed?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" However, it is interesting to note that the phase "How much are you currently able to do," the age factor has made a significant difference on pre-service teachers' perceptions on the three phases about multicultural education.

Though the study showed no significant differences among the five college seniority status groups: Freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate, the comparison of mean scores of the three phases, gives a detail picture of their perceptions. The mean scores showed that, out of the five categories, pre-service teacher graduate category has the highest scores for phases "How much do you know?" and for "How much have you developed?" It indicates that the pre-service teachers who are graduates are more informed and have acquired much greater knowledge and competencies related multicultural education than those pre-service teachers in other four categories. However, it is interesting to find that freshmen getting moderate mean scores for phases "How much do you know?" and "How much have you developed," and getting the highest mean score for the phase "How much are you able to do?" It appears that though freshman are not sure about their knowledge and about what they have developed, they seem confident about what they are able to do about multicultural education.

The age wise, 30 - 40 year category has the highest means for the phases "How much do you know?" and "How much are you currently able to do?" and 40 -50 year category has the

highest mean for the phase "How much have you developed?" It explains that 30-50 years-old pre-service teachers are more confident about their efficacy beliefs in knowledge and skills they have developed and what they are able to do currently in multicultural education than those pre-service teachers in other groups. It is striking, that pre-service teachers who are in the age category 50 and above have lower perspectives compared to other age categories in all the three phases of multicultural education.

The mean scores of the total sample (Table 1) show that early childhood teachers are more knowledgeable about multicultural education than how much they have developed and how much they are currently able to do. Nevertheless, the study did not show any consistent patterns in means related to different levels of age or college seniority status in early childhood pre-service teachers' perceptions in the three phases of multicultural education. A bigger sample of this kind would probably provide the researchers with a better opportunity of identifying patterns associated with early childhood pre-service teachers' age and college seniority status.

Conclusion

For teachers to become agents of multicultural education in inclusive communities, it is necessary that they undergo a very active process where the commitment to change is strongly emphasized. Having the readiness to change the instructional approach to teaching by establishing a positive classroom climate, developing activities and incorporating assignments to address diversity will permit pre-service teachers foster students intellectual, social and personal development to their highest potential, which can result in creating more active, successful, and exciting learning experiences for all students. The challenge for the years ahead is to conquer the fears of change and difference and imagine how our teachers might create and realize the exciting possibilities of equity for our students.

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Table 1

Mean Scores of Pre-service Teachers Perceptions Related to the Three Phases of Multicultual Education

Subjects	How much you					
	Know		Developed		Able to do	
N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
33	47.12	10.26	31.24	6.81	33.76	5.77

Table 2

Mean Status Wise Scores of Pre-service Teachers Perspectives Related to Three Components of Multicultural Education

		How much you						
		Know		Developed		Able to do		
#	Status	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	N
1	Freshman	45.00	13.08	30.33	8.33	38.00	3.61	3
2	Sophomore	48.50	14.91	24.00	7.53	35.25	11.44	4
3	Junior	46.64	9.92	32.00	6.87	34.36	4.99	11
4	Senior	39.00	9.17	31.00	8.54	29.67	7.77	3
5	Graduate	49.67	9.10	33.25	5.15	32.67	3.63	12
	Total	47.12	10.26	31.24	6.81	33.76	5.77	33

Table 3

Mean Age Wise Scores of Pre-service Teachers Perspectives Related to Three Components of Multicultural Education

	How much you						
	Know		Developed		Able to do		
Age	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	N
20-30	46.00	10.19	31.44	7.01	33.38	6.32	16
30-40	50.14	9.21	25.43	6.11	36.29	6.16	7
40-50	47.00	6.81	35.83	3.54	32.83	4.22	6
50 <.	42.71	19.29	33.67	6.03	31.67	6.43	3
Total	46.72	10.16	31.16	6.91	33.75	5.86	32

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